

# ***Righteous Among Nations:***

*The Scope and Forms of Help to Jews in East Central Europe during occupation by the Third Reich*

**Editors:**

**Wacław Wierzbieniec, Elżbieta Rączy**



**Jarosław 2014**

**R**IGHTEOUS AMONG NATIONS:  
THE SCOPE AND FORMS OF HELP  
TO JEWS IN EAST CENTRAL  
EUROPE DURING OCCUPATION  
BY THE THIRD REICH

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**Elżbieta Rączy**

# REVIEWER

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# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>7</b>
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## **Chapter 1**

---

*Wacław Wierzbieniec*

<i>INSTITUTIONAL AND NON-INSTITUTIONAL FORMS OF HELP PROVIDED TO JEWS IN OCCUPIED POLAND DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR .....</i>	<i>11</i>
--	-----------

## **Chapter 2**

---

*Hania M. Fedorowicz*

<i>RESCUERS AND THE RESCUED: THE CASE OF AMALIA SANDBERG-MESNER OF ZALESZCZYKI IN THE EASTERN PROVINCES OF PREWAR POLAND .....</i>	<i>33</i>
--	-----------

## **Chapter 3**

---

*Marek Stoszek*

<i>THE HISTORY OF JEWS IN MYŚLENICE COUNTY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR.....</i>	<i>47</i>
---	-----------

## **Chapter 4**

---

*Mateusz Szpytma*

<i>THE ULMA FAMILY: A SYMBOL OF THE POLES MURDERED FOR HELPING THE JEWS.....</i>	<i>61</i>
--	-----------

## **Chapter 5**

---

*Elżbieta Rączy*

<i>CONTENT-RELATED CONCEPTIONS OF THE MUSEUM OF THE POLES SAVING THE JEWS IN SUBCARPATHIA NAMED AFTER THE ULMA FAMILY IN MARKOWA NEAR ŁAŃCUT .....</i>	<i>71</i>
--	-----------

## **Chapter 6**

---

*Antonio Faur*

<i>YAD VASHEM'S UNRIGHTEOUS: ROMANIAN RESCUERS OF JEWS IN HUNGARY AND NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA WITHOUT OFFICIAL RECOGNITION .....</i>	<i>83</i>
--	-----------

## **Chapter 7**

---

*Peter Borza*

<i>RIGHTEOUS AMONG NATIONS FROM SLOVAKIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC .</i>	<i>95</i>
---	-----------

## **Chapter 8**

---

*Ján Šafin*

<i>UNKNOWN SLOVAK'S SCHINDLER. FATHER VASILIJ PTAŠČUK .....</i>	<i>105</i>
---	------------

## Chapter 9

---

*Igor Shchupak*

*REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE PHENOMENON OF RIGHTEOUS AMONG NATIONS IN UKRAINE* ..... 111

## Chapter 10

---

*Csilla Fedinec*

*JEWISH EYEWITNESS TESTIMONIES IN TRANSCARPATHIA (CARPATHIAN RU-THENIA) IN THE TRANSITION FROM THE HUNGARIAN TO THE SOVIET REGIME (1944–1945)*..... 119

## Chapter 11

---

*Marta Ansilewska-Lehnstaedt*

*BETWEEN 3 AND 871: WHAT DOES THE NUMBER OF “RIGHTEOUS” TELL US ABOUT AIDING THE JEWS IN THE BALTIC COUNTRIES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR?*..... 131

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## JEWISH EYEWITNESS TESTIMONIES IN TRANSCARPATHIA (CARPATHIAN RUTHENIA) IN THE TRANSITION FROM THE HUNGARIAN TO THE SOVIET REGIME (1944–1945)

The region known as Transcarpathia took shape as a political entity only in the 20th century, under names that varied over time and between languages. The geographical extent of the territory also changed several times. Prior to the First World War, it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. From 25 December 1918 to 10 September 1919, it was known as the “Ruszká-Krajna Autonomous Area”, but continuing warfare prevented the establishment of exact boundaries of this territory. After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (21 March – 6 August 1919), this area took the name of “Podkarpatská Rus” and became part of Czechoslovakia under the terms of the Treaty of Saint-Germain. During the brief period of a federated Czechoslovakia (October 1938 – March 1939), the region was designated on 22 November 1938 as an autonomous territory with the official name of “Carpathian Ukraine”. This territory then became independent for a few hours on 15 March 1939. It was quickly re-occupied again by Hungary and remained under Hungarian control for the duration of the Second World War as a Hungarian administrative entity known as the “Subcarpathian Governorship”. The territory then came under Soviet control in October 1944 as “Transcarpathian Ukraine” and became formally incorporated into the Soviet Union on 22 January 1946. On 24 August 1991, the region became the “Transcarpathian county” of independent Ukraine<sup>1</sup>.

Until the mid-1940s, Jews constituted a significant proportion (more than 10%) of the inhabitants of the region. During the Second World War, there were

<sup>1</sup> N. Bárdi, Cs. Fedinec, L. Szarka (eds.), “Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century”, *Atlantic Studies on Society in Change*, no. 138, NY 2011, Columbia University Press, pp. 8–9.

two key periods that determined the tragedy of Hungarian Jewry. The first began in the summer of 1941 when Hungarian authorities deported Jews, who were considered to be recent immigrants from Galicia. They were mainly, but not exceptionally, poor Jews living in the regions re-annexed to Hungary: Polish- or Russian-born Jews, all designated simply as “Galicians” by contemporary public opinion. Between 1941–42, at least 20,000 of them were deported. Most of them became victims of the massacre in Kamenets-Podolsk, but several thousand died in East-Galician ghettos<sup>2</sup>. The second period occurred in 1944. By now, Transcarpathian Jewish communities, who had lost their livelihood, were reduced in numbers by the labour service and deportations to Galicia, and were forced into ghettos and transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in the spring of 1944, following the German occupation of the country<sup>3</sup>. Despite the incomprehensible tragedy, there were a number of survivors who tried to return to Transcarpathia when the Soviet regime gained control of the region at the end of 1944.

In accordance with the Preliminary Truce Agreement concluded on 11 October 1944, Regent Miklós Horthy and the Hungarian Government tried to end their alliance with Nazi Germany. This attempt failed. The ultra-right under Ferenc Szálasi seized power and ordered the Hungarian Army to continue the war on the side of Germany<sup>4</sup>. On the very same day, Hungarian authorities ordered the evacuation of Ungvár/Uzhgorod, which brought an end to the Hungarian public administration of Transcarpathia. A local civil servant, Tivadar Ortutay, wrote in his memoir: “[in the town] I could see that the German military command staff was worried, the leaders of the Hungarian civil and military authorities were now packing in a hurry and called on – mainly their employees – to leave. However, this evacuation process – or rather a rushed evacuation – had been going on for some time. The movement of the inhabitants was more and more disturbed by the frequent appearance of Soviet fighters, but bombers were also flying over our heads. Towns and villages along the river Tisza, especially the railway junction at the town of Csap/Chop and the surroundings – rail lines of the highest importance – were constantly bombed. The Hungarian military authority responsible for the defence of the rear guard established the national civil guard (militia) and demanded that larger reconnaissance parties armed with light weapons should monitor the forests around Ungvár/Uzhgorod [...]”<sup>5</sup>. On October 18, the German command allowed the Transcarpathian Hungarian forces to gradually fall back from the Carpathian ridge to the Tisza–Csap/Chop–Ungvár/Uzhgorod–Vihorlat line. After the withdrawal of Hungarian troops, the fourth Ukrainian Front occupied the Árpád-line<sup>6</sup>. On November 5, Moscow time was introduced in Ungvár/Uzhgorod in every meaning of the word.

<sup>2</sup> K. Frojimovics, *Állampolgárság-revizió: deportálás 1941–1942-ben* [in:] V. Bányai, Cs. Fedinec, Sz.R. Komoróczy (eds.), *Zsidók Kárpátalján: történelem és örökség a dualizmus korától napjainkig*, Budapest 2013a, Aposztróf, pp. 240–248.

<sup>3</sup> K. Frojimovics, 2013b, *Gettósítás és deportálás 1944-ben* [in:] V. Bányai, Cs. Fedinec, S.R. Komoróczy (eds.), *Zsidók Kárpátalján...*, op. cit., pp. 257–264.

<sup>4</sup> I. Romsics, *Az 1947-es párizsi békeszerződés*, Budapest 2006, Osiris, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> T. Ortutay, *Két világháború sodrában*, Veszprém 1986, Pannon, p. 203.

<sup>6</sup> T. Stark, *Magyar foglyok a Szovjetunióban*, Budapest 2006, Lucidus, p. 52.

On 29 June 1945, the Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Republic signed a treaty ceding Transcarpathia to Moscow. As a result, the Soviet Union “got into the Carpathian basin and became Hungary’s direct neighbour”. The Hungarian inhabitants of the region took notice of the disannexation without any apparent resistance<sup>7</sup>. The Hungarian government did not protest against the Soviet “annexation”<sup>8</sup>. On June 2, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, János Gyöngyösi announced at a press conference that “the Hungarian people welcomed the liberation of the Ukrainian people and their union with the great Soviet-Ukrainian parent state”<sup>9</sup>.

After the signature of the Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty, Soviet troops tried to extend the border to the Tisza River by occupying the villages southwest of Beregszász/Berehove along the river. It was marshal Kliment Voroshilov, head of the Hungarian Four Power Controlling Committee, who ordered the troops back from the villages of the Vásárosnamény district (Csonka-Bereg)<sup>10</sup>.

Mátyás Rákosi, General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party (1945–1948), wrote in his memoirs: “One day someone from the Small-Holders [party] called [...] and said that Soviet troops intruded from Carpathian Ukraine into the Tiszahát region to Tarpa and asked me to intervene. Soon I realized that the Small-Holders considered – and spread – this as a fully unjustified and new regional demand. Having controlled the validity of the intrusion, I turned to Stalin again and he promised to look into the matter. On the same day, Soviet Ambassador [Georgy] Pushkin reported to me and informed me that he had been ordered to report on the ethnical data of this region. [...] In three days the ambassador let me know that the Soviet troops had been withdrawn from the region in question. Much later I heard that the whole action was a private initiative by my friend Ivan Turyanitsa, who was the head of the executive committee of the Transcarpathian region at that time. In those days, it was very important for us to be on the best possible terms with the Soviet Union”<sup>11</sup>.

At the end of 1944, terrifying devastation and destruction was visible in the region. Damages were caused not only by weapons, but also to abandoned and deserted settlements, from which a great number of deported and refugees as well as the civil servants of the Horthy regime and the withdrawing Hungarian army. For example, in Ungvár/Uzhgorod, where the number of inhabitants exceeded 40,000 before the war, far less than 20,000 still lived in the first months after the war<sup>12</sup>. “More and more rats have streamed into our capital [Ungvár/Uzhgorod] and rural towns in recent times. Anywhere we step, anywhere we

<sup>7</sup> I. Romsics, *Az 1947-es párizsi...*, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, pp. 99–100.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 100.

<sup>10</sup> Zs. Gyarmathy, *Jóvátétel* [in:] *Szabolcs Szatmári Szemle*, 1989/2, pp. 137–138; Gy. Haas, *Második Trianon*, Békéscsaba 1995, Tevan, pp. 23–27; I. Romsics, *Az 1947-es párizsi...*, op. cit., p. 90; T. Stark, *Magyar foglyok...*, op. cit., p. 69; B. Zseliczky, *Kárpátalja a cseh és a szovjet politika érdekerében 1920–1945*, Budapest 1998, Napvilág, pp. 140–149.

<sup>11</sup> M. Rákosi, *Visszaemlékezések 1940–1956*, Feitl István, Gellériné Lázár Márta, Sipos Levente (eds.), Budapest 1997, Napvilág, pp. 268–269.

<sup>12</sup> К. Лустиг, *Время и люди*, Ужгород 2007, Издательство Валерия Падыка, p. 45.

look, we stumble on them. They have settled in the trash piled up in the abandoned houses and courtyards. [...]”<sup>13</sup>.

During the Second World War, the Jews of the region had to choose one of the following three options: 1) desertion or escape, 2) moving into the Soviet Union or the West or 3) joining the labour service and the death camp. The chance and experience of returning to the deeply changed world of the region depended on which option was chosen<sup>14</sup>.

Option 1: flight. Ernő Wieder recollected in his memories: “Five boys were born in the family [...] I was born on 1 February 1922 and I was given the Hungarian name Ernő, which is Arnost in the Czech language, and it was my official name. My Jewish name is Cvi in Hebrew, which means dear and Hersi in Yiddish”. Wieder was one of those who wanted to escape to the Soviet Union to escape the predictable tempest of the war, but the flight ended with several years in captivity: “Four of us escaped across the border [...] The border was here at Kőrösmező/Yasinia, as the Russians had already been there on the border of Transcarpathia, they had occupied Poland. We were arrested at the border. Then we were taken from one prison to the next. [...] There were people speaking Hungarian and Yiddish, there were people also from Transcarpathia. [...] When, in 1943, I completed the three years of imprisonment I had been committed to, they called me and said that there were warlike relations between Hungary and the Soviet Union and they would not allow me to leave. My release was postponed for an uncertain period of time. Actually, I spent six years instead of three in prison. We were not allowed to write letters. There was a full, 100 percent blackout. I couldn’t hear anything about the Holocaust, and very little about the war... I returned home to Munkács/Mukacheve in December 1946. When I arrived, I didn’t know anything about anybody. I couldn’t see any familiar faces in Munkács/Mukacheve. I went to the house where I had lived hoping that someone – my mother or one of my brothers – would come out. I didn’t know anyone. [...] Our old house had been requisitioned by the Soviets, other people were now living there”<sup>15</sup>.

Option 2: the labour service. Károly Lusztig was drafted into the labour service by the Hungarian authorities in 1943 and had to work in the Tatar pass until mid-October 1944. “With the flood of escaping soldiers and civilians we, the labour servants, also floated towards the West. In November, I managed to make use of the overall mess-up and was able to hide on a farm near Sátoraljaújhely. [...] When the first Soviet troops reached the place, I left for Ungvár/Uzhgorod on foot. Having trudged for several days, I arrived near Ungvár/Uzhgorod. [...] There I was to face the most tragic experience of my life”. He spent ten days in his village, Turjaremete/Tur’i Remety. “I went back to Ungvár/Uzhgorod and voluntarily reported myself to the Soviet army. I was firmly convinced that my

<sup>13</sup> L.M. Takács (ed.), *Aprópenz a történelem színpadán. A kárpátaljai magyar nyelvű sajtó 1945–1948*, Ungvár–Budapest 1994, Intermix, pp. 52–53.

<sup>14</sup> К. Лустиг, *Время и люди*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Ernő Wieder, country: Ukraine, city: Munkács/Mukacheve, date of interview: October 2004. Centropa – Preserving Jewish memory. <http://hu.centropa.org/>.

personal participation will promote the ending of the war, perhaps I could help rescue my parents. But I didn't know anything about their fate until I was disarmed and got back to Ungvár/Uzhgorod"<sup>16</sup>.

Option 3 sheds light on the position of those with a Hungarian identity in a particular way. At the turn of 1930–40, some people were frightened, others welcomed the reappearance of the Hungarian world, although they had all been living in a common minority status in the period between the two world wars. Moshe Kraus from Munkács/Mukacheve remembers the time following the First Vienna Award: "The town was re-annexed to Hungary, Jews enthusiastically welcome the news. They spoke only Yiddish or Hungarian. This was characteristic of the whole town of Munkács/Mukacheve: in the market everybody – including those who were not Jews – could speak Yiddish. [...] Yes, we felt nostalgia towards Hungarians". However, in a short time draft-calls to labour service were delivered, later "foreigners" coming from Galicia were collected and deported to Kamenets-Podolsk<sup>17</sup>. Dávid Klein, who was born in Beregszász/Berehove, did not know as a child that he was a Jew. His father, Móric Klein was a wealthy corn dealer and viniculturalist, who – in spite of his Orthodox origin – did not practise his religion as an adult. In the first days after the First Vienna Award – recalled Dávid Klein – "one of my brothers came home in the evening quite upset and he told us the news that some of who were joining the army beat people only because they were bearded, because they were Jews. However, even then I was not fully aware of my Jewishness [...] As none of us or our relatives had beards". "I still remember how my brothers wanted to convince my father that we should leave the town and Hungary" because of the anti-Jewish laws, and because "in Germany Hitler and his Nazis had already deported the Jews". "Let's leave our home and go to Israel while it is still possible, they said". But Móric Klein did not leave, "he "did not want to hear about emigration". "He considered himself Hungarian, he never concealed it under the Czechoslovak era [...]. We spoke only Hungarian, occasionally German. He was deeply attached to Hungarians, he and his predecessors had been living here, in this milieu for a very long time." With the help of the documents of a friend from Beregszász/Berehove, who was drafted into the army and did not need them anymore, Dávid Klein escaped from the ghetto in the brick-works of Beregszász/Berehove. In early 1945, he started for home to Beregszász/Berehove. "I didn't find anybody at home [...]". When he found out that no one in his family was alive, he could not stay there any longer. "Organized groups of survivors left for Israel. I also left with them [...]. Nearly forty of us came from Beregszász/Berehove, we were made to travel all over Europe, but we couldn't go to Israel because of the English. I returned to Hungary, then I went to Vienna [...], but I happened to be intercepted by Soviet soldiers who checked my identity. As Zakarpatska-Rus was indicated as my birthplace, I was conveyed back to my domicile, Beregszász/Berehove after I had been interrogated for weeks. This way I became and remained a citizen of

<sup>16</sup> J. Kopka, *Zsidó emlékek a Felső-Tisza vidékén. Jewish Memories in the Upper Tisa Region*, Nyíregyháza 2004, Kelet Press, pp. 84–85.

<sup>17</sup> G. Deutsch, *Nagy csodák történetek itt*, Budapest 2005, OR-ZSE, pp. 32–35.



the Soviet Union for 21 years from 5 August 1949. [...] As soon as it was possible, I settled in Hungary”<sup>18</sup>. Quite a lot of Hungarian Jews, who returned home from the hell of the Holocaust were deported again: the process is called “malenkij robot” in Hungarian historiography, which actually meant that the Hungarian male population was dragged off to Soviet forced labour camps.

In 1944–45, the People’s Council of Transcarpathian Ukraine – the government of the temporary Soviet satellite state – organized first-aid stations to help the returning victims of the so-called Fascist terror in Ungvár/Uzhgorod, Munkács/Mukacheve, Beregszász/Berehove and Huszt/Khust. They provided temporary accommodation, clothes and medicine to those who turned to them and free meals were offered in many places. In addition, the International Red Cross and the American Joint Committee supported people returning from deportation. Survivors themselves also established help desks<sup>19</sup>. In the spring of 1945, village committees distributed land to people who did not possess any or possessed very little of it. Land was also allocated to the “working intelligentsia”. Abandoned properties of the Jews killed in Nazi concentration camps were also distributed. Homes of about a thousand Jewish families were given to the families of Soviet front-line soldiers or transformed into schools or public institutions<sup>20</sup>.

It is not easy to obtain a clear picture behind the statistics, as statistics always have a tendency to slightly distort, even if the clarity of the data survey cannot be doubted. However, no one can deny the fact that the numerical loss of Jewish inhabitants, which meant about 100,000 people, nearly 15% of the total population between the two world wars, can hardly be measured. According to contemporary data, in 1945 more than 10,000 Jews returned to Transcarpathia (first) from concentration camps and (a bit later) from Soviet gulags<sup>21</sup>. Emigration began in the same year and went on until the border was open. “The majority of those who returned from extermination camps looked around and left home [...]”<sup>22</sup>. The estimated number of Holocaust survivors, who did not leave Transcarpathia is between 4,000 and 5,000<sup>23</sup>. Many of them looked upon the Soviet Union in an idealized way when they – threatened by a world-wide catastrophe – escaped there, and when, even later, they saw the Soviet Union as the saviour of Jews.

Between 1945 and 1947, nearly 15,000 Transcarpathian Holocaust survivors settled in Czechoslovakia, two-thirds of them first looked around Transcarpathia and then decided to leave<sup>24</sup>. We should recognize that this was not only a local phenomenon, as a similar process was going on in neighbouring

<sup>18</sup> J. Kopka, *Zsidó emlékek...*, op. cit., pp. 100–105.

<sup>19</sup> К. Лустиг, *Время и люди*, op. cit., pp. 39–41.

<sup>20</sup> Р. Офіцинський, *Аграрна політика Закарпатської України* [in:] М. Вереш, Ч. Фединець (eds.), *Закарпаття 1919–2009 років: історія, політика, культура*. Ужгород 2010, Видавництво «Ліра», p. 318.

<sup>21</sup> К. Лустиг, *Время и люди*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> K. Lusztig, “A gyertyák csonkig égnek” A kárpátaljai zsidóság sorsa a soá után [in:] *Múlt és jövő*, 1992/3, p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> К. Лустиг, *Время и люди*, op. cit., p. 48; А. Рейдер, *Еврейская община Закарпатья. XX век: События, судьбы, документы*, Ужгород 2004, Издательство Валерия Падыка, p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Й.А. Елинек, *Карпатская диаспора. Евреи Подкарпатской Руси и Мукачева (1848–1948)*, Ужгород 2010, Издательство Валерия Падыка, pp. 405, 408.

Ukrainian counties. In accordance with the Soviet-Polish Treaty, between late 1944 and autumn of 1946, more than 30,000 Jews left for Poland, and more than 20,000 people left Chernivtsi county for Romania. The majority of Jews, who settled in Poland and Romania, left for a new home in Israel within a short time. Between December 1946 and July 1948, a significant number of Jewish inhabitants living in the central, eastern and southern regions of Soviet Ukraine were relocated to the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Birobidzhan, in eastern Siberian Russia<sup>25</sup>.

In March 1946, the Hungarian ambassador, Gyula Szegfű, took office in Moscow. Before taking up his post, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided him with “only some general oral instructions regarding the politics he should represent in Moscow. We should note that the Ministry did not supplement anything later, this way Szegfű was left alone nearly in all important questions for the whole period, which had all the advantages and disadvantages of independence”. As for Transcarpathia, he dealt with the problems of repatriates and urged the competent authorities to take steps for the establishment of a Hungarian consulate in Transcarpathia<sup>26</sup>. According to Szegfű’s report, the question of the “Transcarpathian Hungarian Consulate” was raised when secretary Zoltán Tompa, who was born in Munkács/Mukacheve, arrived in Moscow and let him know that he had certain knowledge of a telegram sent by the Ministry several weeks ago, which instructed me [Szegfű] to make preliminary inquiries at the foreign ministry [in Moscow] about the possibilities of the establishment of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Consulate. As the telegram did not arrive, I thought it necessary to make use of [...] my visit at the foreign ministry [...]”<sup>27</sup>. In a discussion with Andrey Vlasov, deputy head of the Balkan department of the foreign ministry, a question “concerning Carpathian Ukraine” was repeated by Szegfű, which dealt with “the very serious problems of repatriation of the relatively high number of Hungarian inhabitants living there” In accordance with Vasilij Beljajev, head of the consular office of the foreign ministry, Vlasov said that “he can see the radical solution [...] only if – after the peace treaty – a separate treaty will be concluded between the two states, which – as he hopes – will solve all Transcarpathian problems for the good of all”. But this treaty was never concluded<sup>28</sup>. However, “increasing numbers of Transcarpathian Hungarians turned to the embassy even in 1947 to apply for repatriation to Hungary”<sup>29</sup>. We can state that there were people of Jewish origin among them. At the beginning, immigration was dealt with in the sphere of the embassy, later it became very difficult, almost impossible: the Soviet foreign ministry wanted to see the data of the applicants, and then decide upon their being Soviet citizens or not. Those who were considered Soviet citizens were not permitted to leave the country.

<sup>25</sup> Л. Фінберг, В. Любченко (eds.), *Нариси з історії та культури євреїв України. Упорядники*, Київ 2009, Дух і літера, pp. 208–209.

<sup>26</sup> Gy. Lázár, *Szegfű Gyula követ és a moszkvai magyar követség jelentései (1946–1948)*, Budapest 1998, Magyar Országos Levéltár, pp. 5–14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, pp. 152–153.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, pp. 151–152.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 153.

Parallel with migration from Transcarpathia, the reverse process of migration into the region began from the inner parts of the Soviet Union, the new holder of power. There were several thousand Soviet Jews among them, who settled there. They occupied important posts in the party organizations, in public administration, in the fields of industry, agriculture, commerce and science. The newcomers were very different from the local Jewish communities that had lived there before the war. They were socialized in a society focusing on Communist ideology<sup>30</sup>. At the beginning, many of them wanted to hide their background, most of them declared themselves to be Russian. The contrast between “local” and “eastern” Jews was especially obvious in the decades following the war, but the status is still in evidence today.

The few Jewish survivors who did not leave Transcarpathia wanted to take part in its rebuilding. They started enterprises and several of them were transformed into giant Soviet works. “In the meantime, the Soviet regime settled in Transcarpathia. Our hopes that after the war Transcarpathia could return to Czechoslovakia passed away. We knew very little about the Soviet Union. We were told that in the Soviet Union there was nothing in the shops and one had to queue up for everything. But until we could see all this with our own eyes, we didn’t care much. To tell the truth, we could hardly imagine that something like this could happen. But very soon we would experience what Soviet power was”<sup>31</sup>. The regime did not allow us to prove our good intentions: “I very much wanted to enter the Communist party, it was an urge of my conscience. I was living under the Soviet regime only for a short time and I was an idealist. I believed Soviet propaganda that in the Soviet Union everybody was equal and there was no oppression and ethnic segregation, which we could experience here [in Transcarpathia] after 1938. The idea of Communism attracted me very much, but what was called Communism in the Soviet Union had nothing to do with the idea. Unfortunately, I did not know it then”<sup>32</sup>. As Tibor Hochman sums it up very aptly: “With the Soviet regime, something arrived that we had not experienced under either of the former regimes – the sight of empty shelves. [...] We were living in our old house, we got Soviet identity cards, we became Soviet citizens. In my identity card, my name was written Tiberij in Russian, Miklós was transformed into Nikolay. At that time, more and more people arrived in Munkács/Mukacheve from the Soviet Union, mainly from Ukraine. My brother and I could learn some Russian. People arriving from the Soviet Union seemed for us to have come from another world. The Soviet order began to fight against religion in Transcarpathia. They began to close the churches, regardless of religion or denomination. Believers were considered to be near criminals. The Soviet Union disliked people who were in touch with their relatives living abroad. It

<sup>30</sup> L. Tsiegelman, *The Impact of Ideological Changes in the USSR on Different Generations of the Soviet Jewish Intelligentsia* [in:] Y. Ro’i, A. Beker (eds.), *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union*, New York 1991, New York University Press, pp. 42–72.

<sup>31</sup> Ignác Neubauer, country: Ukraine, city: Ungvár/Uzhgorod, date of interview: October 2003. Centropa – Preserving Jewish memory. <http://hu.centropa.org/>.

<sup>32</sup> Tilda Galpert, country: Ukraine, city: Ungvár/Uzhgorod, date of interview: April 2003. Centropa – Preserving Jewish memory. <http://hu.centropa.org/>.

was very strange for us, but those who arrived from the Soviet Union thought it was obvious. My brother and I looked at this new world a bit sceptically, but we were interested. We realized that our earlier life was finished, we had to get used to the fact that we were living in the Soviet Union”<sup>33</sup>.

After the world catastrophe, out of 400, about 20 Jewish communities survived and tried to reorganize themselves. As far as we know, only four Jewish communities were active in Ungvár/Uzhgorod, Munkács/Mukacheve, Huszt/Khust and Beregszász/Berehove in 1950. The registration of the communities was forcefully prevented. The number of those individuals who dared to celebrate Jewish holidays became fewer and fewer<sup>34</sup>. The Soviet regime did not tolerate believers – regardless of religion and denomination<sup>35</sup>. Two forms of reactions were possible: “In spite of the very powerful fight of the Soviet Union against religion, we together with my mother still had respect for Jewish tradition”<sup>36</sup>. Or else: “When Transcarpathia became Soviet, I did not keep Jewish traditions or Jewish religion anymore”<sup>37</sup>. According to the official propaganda, in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, 80% of Jewish children were not educated to respect Jewish traditions. However, in Transcarpathia the rate of those with some respect for their heritage remained the same<sup>38</sup>. Jewish life could survive only in the field of raising children, if it could survive at all. There was some collaboration to keep Jewish holidays and there were some melameds (teachers), who taught us about the essence of Jewishness.

During the Soviet period, only one synagogue remained in its original function in Transcarpathia – in Huszt/Khust. Synagogues and meeting houses were generally transformed into telephone exchanges, drugstores, gymnasiums, cinemas, storehouses, etc. Some of them were not only transformed. The synagogue in Tiszabogdány/Bohdan was demolished and it was recycled for building material<sup>39</sup>. The number of Jewish cemeteries decreased over time. Jews who protested too loudly were imprisoned under various pretexts in Transcarpathia.

However, we should state that this phenomenon could be experienced not only in Transcarpathia; the situation of Jews was similar in all of Ukraine. By the end of the Soviet era, only 15 officially operating Jewish communities were registered in Ukraine, of which 13 had synagogues<sup>40</sup>. In 1992, when Ukraine became independent, a wave of revitalization began, but – according to the Ukrainian

<sup>33</sup> Tibor Hochman, country: Ukraine, city: Ungvár Uzhgorod, date of interview: October 2003. Centropa – Preserwing Jewish memory. <http://hu.centropa.org/>

<sup>34</sup> K. Lusztig, “A gyertyák...”, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>35</sup> Roth, country: Ukraine, city: Ungvár/Uzhgorod, date of interview: October 2003. Centropa – Preserwing Jewish memory. <http://hu.centropa.org/>.

<sup>36</sup> Ignác Neubauer, country: Ukraine, city: Ungvár/Uzhgorod, date of interview: October 2003. Centropa – Preserwing Jewish memory. <http://hu.centropa.org/>.

<sup>37</sup> Roth, country: Ukraine, city: Ungvár/Uzhgorod, date of interview: October 2003. Centropa – Preserwing Jewish memory. <http://hu.centropa.org/>.

<sup>38</sup> А. Эдельман, *Современность и иудаизм*, Ужгород 1970, Карпаты, pp. 24, 33–34; А. Эдельман, *Иудаизм: прошлое без будущего*, Ужгород 1977, Карпаты, p. 97; А. Эдельман 1970, За стінами синагоги. (Іудейський культ і його реакційна суть). Київ: Товариство «Знання» Української РСР, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> F. Orbán (ed.), *A zsidó kultúra a Kárpát-medencében. Discovering Jewish Culture in the Carpathian Basin*, Budapest 2006, Makkabi, p. 315.

<sup>40</sup> Л. Фінберг, В. Любченко (eds.), *Нариси з історії...*, op. cit., p. 274.

National Statistical Office – the number of Jews in Ukraine was no more than 103,000 in 2005<sup>41</sup>, nearly as many as the number of Jews in Transcarpathia itself prior to the world catastrophe, and only 3% of these remaining inhabitants preserved the Yiddish language.

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